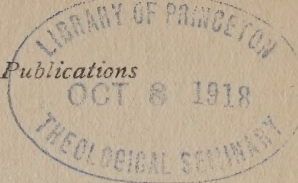


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THE REAL PROBLEM OF ESCHATOLOGY

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The real problem of
eschatology

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CERTAINLY the Church of Christ did as a fact settle down to the work of redeeming the world. It was convinced that it could regenerate Humanity. It had this work to do here on earth, and was prepared to see that work take the form of a long process by the slow arrival of grace and through the working of the Spirit. It had profound interest in making good citizens ; and we can all read in the first volume of Harnack's "*Expansion of Christianity*," the vigour, confidence, and virility with which it made its offer, to the Empire of Rome, of the new citizenship which it had the power to create. So it set itself in the direction by which it finally won the Empire under Constantine. But was all this a second thought, a pis-aller ? Was it an alternative to their first expectation ? Was it the result of a great disillusion ? And this question only raises one that goes deeper still. Was this earthly expansion wholly foreign

to the original purpose of Jesus Christ? Had He meant something wholly different, and had He looked for that which never happened? Did the Church take up ethical and social interests which he had discarded or cancelled? Was it all a gigantic blunder?

Now this is the question raised by those who lay extreme emphasis on eschatology. Let us take a typical case. It shall be from the work of George Tyrrell, who is following Schweitzer. He starts by a statement that religion is always pessimistic :—

“Religion deepens, and is deepened by, a profound and divine discontent. Pessimism is the verdict of experience. Whether in himself or in the world, if a man has ideals for both, he is bound to find not only failure, but an iron law of inevitable failure, of progress thwarted and frustrated by its own multiplicity and fecundity. Born of a felt contrast between the actual and man’s spiritual ideals, combined with a gradual recognition of the schism as inevitable and unconquerable, this pessimism is the pre-supposition of that optimism of blind faith by which it is overcome. It is in strange

contrast with that form of modern Christianity which maintains its courage and hope by the belief that the schism between the ideal and the actual will eventually be healed, and that the Kingdom of God is the natural term of a process of moral and social development. Nothing is more evident than that Jesus had no such faith or hope. The revelation of the apocalyptic kingdom of heaven was a gospel only for those who despaired of the world. The verdict of the deeper spiritual intuition is always pessimistic. For the world is the arena of a conflict between a multitude of irreconcilable ends. The belief that they are ordained to an eventual harmony, however useful as a stimulus to combat, falls to pieces on a closer inspection, which reveals an inherent fault or rift in nature.”—

Christianity at the Cross Roads, pages 117-120.

The statement here is of the strongest: “failure is inevitable by an iron law”; “the world is a conflict of irreconcilable ends.” So he says. And Christianity, according to him, saved the day by intensifying this pessimism so far as this life goes, and flinging all its optimism into another world hereafter. And

that other world has nothing to do with this. Its principles are the reverse of those necessary now. It does not look for its realization in a kingdom of righteousness.

“Righteousness was not the substance of the Kingdom; eternal life was not the moral life. In the Kingdom men were to be as the angels of God; the moral struggle with all its conditions and occasions would be over; it would be rewarded by rest in glory, not by the glory of going on. There is no hint of a reign of morality here upon earth to be brought about by the gradual spread of Christ’s teaching and example. Jesus did not come to reveal a new ethics of this life, but the speedy advent of a new world in which ethics would be superseded. The virtues of the poor and the meek and the merciful and the pure would cease with their occasions. The morality of Jesus was for this life, not for the next—the passing condition, not the abiding substance, of blessedness.”—

Christianity at the Cross Roads, pages 49-51.

There could, therefore, be no earthly interests left. How could there be, when everything was to vanish away?

“Christ had not come to emphasize the religion and the revelation implied in righteousness. His emphasis was on the other worldly, supermoral life of the coming Kingdom. What need of a new ethics for expiring humanity?”—

Christianity at the Cross Roads, page 66.

There was no conception of growth, development, reconciliation, for the temper created was absorbed in the expectation of the great catastrophe, and was incapable of labour and service and use on an earth that was only ready to vanish away.

Let us examine this general statement. It rests on two positions, (1) that Eschatology springs from pessimism, and (2) that there is no continuity between the world that is disappearing and the world that is to come.

We will begin with the word “pessimism.” Now this word carries with it its own condemnation, for we can be quite sure that something is wrong whenever we ascribe pessimism to the Jew. The Jew stands before us for all time as the inveterate optimist. From first to last optimism is his note. That is why Schopenhauer denounced him as the

arch foe. And this optimism rests on the great opening chapter of Genesis, which declares the whole of God's creation to be, by nature and purpose, very good. This declaration is the object of the whole chapter. This is all that matters. An earlier Babylonian tradition supplies the form, but the intention stamped upon it by the Jew is this truth of the inherent, radical, elemental, valid secret of all creation. It comes from the Divine goodness, and was made to be good.

Then, secondly, the cardinal characteristic of the Jewish temperament is prophecy. It was into prophecy that he put his true self; and prophecy is simply the assertion that as the beginning was good, so will, and must, the end be. There is a purpose in things which is divine and deliberate; and that purpose is good. And God is a God of righteousness, that is, a God Who is pledged to work out His purpose. To that purpose He will be unfailingly faithful. "In the Mount of the Lord it will be seen." The end will justify everything, and God will see to it that that end arrives. The religious chiefs of Israel are those who can detect this purpose and foresee its working and declare its

conclusion. The purpose is seen to widen and deepen as experience grows and the end gets ever further and further off. But while the end is postponed, the hope rises invincible. No misfortune can beat it under; no delay can sicken it at heart. It defies the evil facts, and over-rides all pessimistic fear. "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olives shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." (Habakkuk iii. 17-18). That is the high expression of Jewish optimism, which is carried out to its ideal issue in the prophecy of the suffering servant of Isaiah ii, in which Israel recognizes that even its captivity, its exile, its ruin, yet work out a far more glorious consummation for the broken people who through their very distress become a light for the Gentiles.

Prophecy then is the expression of optimism; and Eschatology is the last word of prophecy.

For prophetic optimism had come to a critical arrest. It had concentrated its hopes on a

Messiah, a Jew who would be the perfect channel for realizing the Divine righteousness. And that Jew had not arrived, and there seemed less and less prospect of his being discovered. And therefore it was that, as even the Maccabean hope began to fail, prophecy, refusing to allow that it was defeated, took on an eschatological form. If man could not produce a Messiah, God would produce His own Man for Himself. There would be a Son of Man, introduced by God's violent intervention, if you like, from Heaven. For God will never be beaten; He must bring about His own consummation: and if it cannot happen by process from within, it will come about by cataclysm from without. So, from the vision of the typical man by the ancient of days in Daniel, it advanced to the individual man whom God was reserving for the final day as seen in the Book of Enoch. This is the origin of the apocalypses; and it is seen that, so understood, apocalypse is the last word of prophecy and the highest expression of optimism. It exists to deny the pessimistic verdict. It declares that at last there must be the great Assize, at which God will appear to vindicate Himself in human history. Professor Burkitt,

in his Schweich lectures, has well brought out the uniqueness of this conception. Judaism has seen itself, since the prophecy of Daniel, as a great power in 'welt-politik.' It has recognized itself as crowning human civilization, following the succession of the great Empires. And it is convinced that, in spite of all the disaster that has overtaken the nation, God will reveal at last His divine purpose through the triumph of Israel. This victory is to arrive here on earth, and is to justify the order of facts that have been. This vision is the expression, then, of an invincible hope. And it is noticeable, as Professor Burkitt points out, that when Israel at the destruction of Jerusalem finally lost hope in its own world-victory and fell back on the Law, it dropped the apocalypses, which became the watchwords of the new Israel, the people of Christ who still believed that God would do His great work and bring about His Kingdom, and who cherished therefore the eschatological books as their true heritage. So far then as the Old Testament goes, pessimism is the very last word that you could apply to the temper expressed in Eschatology.

And when we come to our Lord in the New Testament, can any thought be further from His mind than the pessimism in which Tyrrell finds the source of Eschatology? For our Lord, this earth bears perpetual and everlasting witness to the goodness of God the Father. He always assumes this primal and normal relationship of God the good Father to an earth which He loves. He makes His sun to shine on the good and evil alike, and sends His rain on the just and on the unjust. He cares for the tiniest sparrow that falls to the ground; He loves the beauty of the flowers in the field. And when Christ utters His ascetic precepts, as in the Sermon on the Mount, far from being based on any apocalyptic conception of the worthlessness of this world, it is rather on the special value in which things of the body stand in God's sight that He asks man to detach himself from them. Man need not care for these things of this earth, just because God cares so much for them and knows that he has need of them. He is not to think about food or body, not because these are unworthy of God but because they are His special province. He feeds the birds; He will feed man. We need

not care for beautiful clothes, because God can pour beauty out over the lilies greater than any which glorifies the royal robes of Solomon. God delights in the loveliness of delicate fabrics, He cares for every hair on a man's head. Man is to move about the world confident and unanxious because he is in His Father's house. Here is the great faith of Genesis, that God made all for good, carried to its height.

There is certainly no pessimism in this, and, as to the discontinuity of which Tyrrell speaks, let us turn to the parables of the Lord, in which He declares that, in order to understand the Kingdom to come, you have only to look at the natural earth, which from end to end reveals the very laws and methods on which His Kingdom, when it comes, will be founded. There will be an absolute continuity of type, of habit, of quality and of character. The way to enter into the mind of the Kingdom is to watch the ploughman, or the sower, or the fisherman, or the merchant, as they labour here. It will be just like that. At each level of life there will be perfect correspondence in method and principle, and all will hang together as one consistent and coherent and uniform whole. And since the

laws and methods are the same in both worlds, so the character they acquire in each will be exactly the same. The same temper which shows itself faithful over talents here on earth will be the very temper required to govern cities hereafter. So deep is our Lord's admiration for the qualities displayed in secular affairs in the present condition of things, that He actually draws the picture of the unjust steward in order to emphasize His need for the children of light to possess those very qualities which the children of this world put out so resolutely and courageously. So again the laws of growth and of action which prevail here will hold good there. "He that hath," for instance, "to him shall be given"; "Ask, and ye shall have." And the sins which exclude from the other world are just those which spell failure here. Folly, for instance, and miscalculation, such as sets to work to build a tower without knowing how to finish it. "Without are extortioners, adulterers, and liars." The limits of the city there correspond with the limits here. So that the ethical continuity between both worlds is complete.

And this ethical interest is dominant whether here or there. How could it be other-

wise ? For, as we have said, Eschatology is the culmination of prophecy ; and prophecy was absorbed in the assertion of righteousness as the one thing of supreme value. It existed to affirm the ethical outlook, and to insist on the necessity of a final kingdom of good, a kingdom which is the same kingdom when it takes on an eschatological form ; for though it comes in a catastrophic character, it nevertheless comes, and comes here. It is not another world to fly to from this, but another world that arrives here to fulfil and consummate the earth that is, and man as he has striven to be.

And now, I think, we can detect the inherent fallacy of the eschatological extremists. They always assume that we are in the presence of two antagonistic motives, two incompatible ideals : (1) The intense expectation of a sudden coming, and (2) A vivid interest in the present ; or again (1) The motive of world-renunciation, and (2) The motive of world-redemption ; or (1) The ideal of a catastrophic arrival from without, and (2) Of grace instilled from within ; or (1) The transcendental impact, and (2) The immanent growth. These pairs of conceptions are supposed to negative and cancel each the

other. If men expect the future, they cannot care for the present. If they are looking for a sudden arrival, then they can have no sense of prolonged time. If their mind is other-worldly, then it is sure to be reckless and unstable in regard to this world. The two motives cannot coincide ; and therefore only when the expectation of a sudden arrival had proved to be a delusion could they turn to take up the counter-motive of the slow process of redemption.

Now, this at first sight looks probable enough, no doubt. We should naturally suppose that a passionate expectation of a tremendous change should disturb and destroy the interest of the present. But the real problem of Christian Eschatology is that it does not. This is the extraordinary fact that has got to be accounted for. The facts directly traverse this probability. What we find is that these two motives work side by side. They play into one another without any sign of antagonism or collision. They co-exist in the same person at the same time, and they reinforce one another. The sense of the imminent end of all things, far from tending to disorder or eviscerate the demands of the moral law or the steadiness of self-control

or the urgency of present conduct or the vitality of living interests, actually emphasizes and intensifies these demands. The motives intertwine and the appeals coincide.

This, then, is the extraordinary phenomenon that criticism has to take into account. First let us exhibit the fact; and then let us see whether we can find the explanation for it.

It has been already suggested that this coincidence of motives was clear enough in our Lord Himself. We all now recognize how vivid and intense was His apocalyptic outlook. And yet nothing can exceed His delight in the enduring punctualities, the unvarying rhythms, the intimate delicacies of attention and interest which signalize for Him the love of the Father for this homely earth of ours. But it will be better to turn, perhaps, to those who might be most calculated to lose their balance under such a critical strain. So let us note the tone of the earlier Epistles—books written within the eschatological temper, and illustrative of its earliest and most effective character. At once we see how allied the two conceptions are. The writers appeal to the immediate coming in order to intensify moral stability. Take 1 Peter,

iv. 7 : " The end of all things is at hand." What follows from that ? " Be ye therefore sober unto prayer ; have fervent charity towards one another ; use hospitality without grudging ; as each hath received a gift, so let him minister," &c. It will be seen that the whole ordering of life falls under the category of the End. The stress of the immediate coming falls on the virtues of ordinary moral control, self-restraint, unselfishness, keenness of responsibility. The effect of the pressure of the Appearing, far from reducing the values of present interests, gives them their full significance. The *ad interim* life rises in importance. Each separate function is to be taken seriously and scientifically. " If a man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God," &c. He will have to answer for it. There must be forethought, and prudence, and patience and wisdom. So with St. James v. 7 : " Be patient until the Coming ; Behold the husbandman waiteth ; stablish your hearts," &c. The Coming stresses the value of regular seasons and of unshaken purpose.

There is one passage indeed in which St. Paul allows the Second Coming to loosen present obligations (1 Corinthians vii. 29) : " But this I say,

brethren, the time is short, henceforth let those that have wives may be as though they had none ; and those that weep, as though they wept not ; and these that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not : for the fashion of this world passeth away." But his habit is to draw exactly the opposite conclusion. In 1 Thessalonians v., for instance, the sudden, thief-like Coming, does not throw life out of gear or paralyze it. On the contrary, the temper involved is watchfulness and sobriety. They are not to be excited, or restless, or feverish, because the " day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night." We who are of the day watch and are sober ; we equip ourselves with breast-plate and helmet ; we look ahead and edify one another, and build up a clear settled ordered life. " Edify one another," he says, " be at peace among yourselves ; admonish the disorderly ; support the weak ; be long-suffering toward all ; follow after that which is good ; pray without ceasing." So in 2 Thessalonians iii, the sins condemned are restlessness, idleness, refusal to work or to gain your own living. There appears to be a small group which draws the same conclusions as Tyrrell or Schweitzer : " For we hear of some that walk among you

disorderly, that work not at all, but are busy-bodies." They are soundly condemned, and the Epistle exhorts that with quietness they work and eat their own bread. The Coming does not upset the social, domestic, industrial qualities. It evokes them into steadier and more persevering efficiency: "Be not weary in well-doing." Let us take the most signal instance of all, in 1 Corinthians xv. 51: "But we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." What is the moral to be drawn from the thought of this tremendous convulsion? It is this: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not vain in the Lord." The breathless, devouring expectation of the moment when the trumpet shall blow gives to the believer sure stability, motionless determination, persistence in regular fixed responsible work, an unshaken desire to go on doing what he is at, with an increased sense of its reality and an assurance of the rational result of organized and obligatory work. To St. Paul, the believers are already anticipating the Day. They are even now doing

its work. Their present ethics are the ethics of the Day when it comes. They are doing its works now under the cloud of night ; so that when it comes it will only serve to justify and perpetuate their actual preparation for it, which is already in existence. So the two stages are combined and co-ordinated. "The day cometh" when the value of their present work will be verified. Work, then, now all the harder at it ; for indeed it is a Judge that comes, and He will try it as by fire ; and only good work will stand at that day ; and no hay or stubble will survive. Therefore they must take the more pains at securing stability in their work. So St. James says : "Murmur not, brethren, one against another, that ye be not judged : behold, the judge standeth before the doors." How indeed can the ethical interests be other than dominant in an Eschatology which identifies the appearing with the Judgment ? And the Judgment admits to a life for which men have become qualified by the part they have played beforehand. It will stablish, settle, perfect them. The present process is confirmed, extended, deepened. This had been emphasised in our Lord's parable of the talents, "occupy

till I come." The expectation of the Coming prompts laborious diligence, patient punctuality, persevering resolution, the set will, the calm faculties, the watchful eye, the alert abilities, of those who put money out to profit. It does not set men idly agape, but makes them busier and busier. The more incalculable the possibility ahead, the more anxious you become to fulfil your urgent immediate task. All the Lord's parables which are concerned with the great expectation dwell on the necessity for fore-thought ; difficult and sustained attention ; habitual and regular duties ; and above all, watchfulness.

We need not further labour this point. It is plain that Eschatology did, as a fact, for the first believers intensify the significance of ordinary ethics and heighten the value of patient and steady service. And this being so, it is certain that somehow the two conceptions of cataclysm and process, convulsion and ethical interest, are not contradictory but co-relative. They feed one another. They belong to the same order of mind. They are parallel antitheses ; and together they constitute the complex whole of fact. They obviously have some inner law of unity.

Can we at all see what this law may be? Well, let us begin with prophecy. For Eschatology is, as we have said, the characteristic last word of prophecy, the crowning instance of the prophetic method. Now, what is prophecy and what is its method? Prophecy means seeing things as they are in God's sight; and that appears to mean, seeing them summed up abruptly in single catastrophic moments. Prophecy omits and overlaps the intervals of steady growing process, the continuity of ordered succession. It makes at once for sudden and swift emergencies. It gathers up the significance of history into instantaneous acts which it calls "days." In these "days," the purpose of life is revealed, and facts are judged, and verdicts are passed. Long periods are swept up into these rare and violent instants of moral crisis. This is prophetic history—history, that is, fore-shortened into climaxes. And Eschatology draws this whole temper up into the final Day, on to which all other "days" lead. It is true, then, to the ordinary prophetic mind in summing up life by its rare and violent moments. But then the prophets are the established witnesses to the value of ethics, to the righteous

life, to the kingdom which is established in law and justice on enduring foundations. All this belief, then, in social order and organization cannot be at variance with the conception of catastrophe. And why? Because according to the prophets the catastrophe itself only revealed what the process of growth has been. The particular qualities which stand the strain of the crisis are just those which have been growing in secret, stage by stage, in continuous development during the quiet period overleapt. The crisis, when it breaks in, does not ask for new qualities, but for the familiar and habitual qualities which are slowly, gradually, deliberately built up under cover of the quiet. The hidden story of the quiet days is verified by catastrophe. That is why the catastrophe forms a judgment, a disclosure. For it forces to the front just that which has been hidden. In the hour of crisis, nothing new can be attempted—that is what constitutes its terror. Nothing counts in that hour but that which has gone before it. So our Lord is always warning us that we must anticipate the crisis if we are ever to be safe in it. Only in the quiet process before the crisis arrives are we free, self-con-

trolled, and self-directed. Our command over the crisis, then, depends on our activity in anticipation of it. And our activity in anticipation of it depends on the moral steadiness of our enduring will. So the *ad interim* ethics take on an eternal value. The judgment under crisis eternalizes the temper of the interval. "There is nothing hidden which shall not be revealed." There is one law at work under cover and in the open.

This then is our point. Prophecy, by interpreting life through its rare and sudden moments, gives added meaning to the periods overleapt. Catastrophe does but release and vindicate and sanction the permanent ethical qualities of the working life. The eschatological outlook is therefore ethical at its very core; and the ordinary habitual ethics look for an eschatological test and standard. They require it as a vindication of their effort and their hope.

The prophetic temper, then, brings together the double outlook, and makes each correlative to the other. Process and catastrophe, catastrophe and process, work together to a single issue. And there is another law of our spiritual life which has the same result. It interprets

and justifies the identical interest both of the outlook into a far-away other world and the intense concern with the life that now is. It is the law of transcendent ethics ; and that means that Christian ethic rests on this one vital conviction, that in order to determine your conduct here on earth you must first have secured a pivot in the transcendent world beyond. You cannot explain, and still less redeem, this human life of ours out of itself, out of its own resources, by its own perspectives, from within its own horizons. Seen merely from within, it is incomplete and unintelligible. You must secure an outpost, advantage ground outside it, in order to deal with it. Out there in that other world take your stand ; and then, with this footing secure, you may return upon the life here, and determine its direction, and assert and govern and adapt and correct it, so that it takes on a rational purpose, and serves a coherent end. The effort at renunciation by which the soul makes its escape to another world is for the sake of this world ; for so only can it be redeemed. Renunciation is then the secret of redemption ; and the soul that wrenches itself clear of this life's entanglements in order

that it may escape into the invisible, does not, therefore, lose its interest in that which it so forsakes, but, on the contrary, keeps it as the goal of all its desire. Far from the Seen being cheapened by being postponed to the Unseen, it acquires a new worth which of itself it never could have had. Now that it is brought into relationship with the eternal, the full force of the eternal tells upon it and transmutes it. Start from Heaven, and earth becomes sacred. The one way in which to raise this life to its highest power is to act upon it from beyond its own frontiers.

The cardinal passage which embodies this temper is in Colossians iii ; " Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Does this mean that this world is dead to you? Has this life become empty and meaningless, and has earth no activities and duties for you to fulfil? Exactly the contrary. The conclusion St. Paul draws is that the entire round of human life falls within the scope of this hidden existence in Christ. The ethical significance of the actual situation on earth all flows to it out of its secret source. The

body, for instance, has become sacred ; it belongs to the risen life ; it is included within the action of Christ's Resurrection. Therefore, "mortify the members which are upon the earth," not because these members are worthless, but because they are worthy of being included within the life of the new man. "Put ye on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." The moralizing of the bodily passions and emotions comes from their being claimed, not expelled, by the new manhood. So the whole code of conduct follows : "kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one with another, forgiving each other." "The peace of God rules in their hearts" because they are called in the one Body. "And whatever they do now in word or deed, they do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." So marriage is now regulated by the hidden Christ ; and husbands love their wives, and children obey their parents, and fathers do not provoke their children, and servants obey their masters, and masters pay right wages. And all this because of the Master in Heaven. And in wisdom the believer walks towards them that are without, "buying up

the opportunities " ; and his very talk is made bright and sparkling by the same law. " Let your conversation be seasoned unto salt." No fragment of his earthly life is left untouched or unprescribed, by virtue of that unseen transcendent secret.

The same application of the law meets us in the famous passage from Romans xii. The believers are not to be fashioned according to this world, but transformed by renewal in the one body. And because of this transcendental pivot, therefore all the functions, limitations, preparations, specializations, of life here are vitalized, appointed, sanctioned. Brotherly love, sympathy, forgiveness, hospitality, are all determined by organic correlation into the one body whose Head is the Unseen Christ. The whole of this life is made precious by virtue of subordination to the life beyond.

After all, this is only the completed Christian expression of the great law which determined everything in the older covenant. " Be ye holy, for I am holy." God Himself is the ground of all human holiness. Ethics involve a theological base.

We see then how the transcendental character of the moral life brings into co-ordination and identity the double motives of expectation and present interest, the world beyond and the world here. Now let us take a third law, which gives to both outlooks a common ground. It is what I would call the law of arrival. That is, whether the succour of God comes to us by gradual process or by catastrophie invasion, it always means an arrival from elsewhere. The Kingdom of God "comes;" and that means, it does not grow from below, it does not come about by development from within, or by a gradual process of consummation; but it arrives from afar, according to the law which St. John the Baptist expressed in his historical epigram: "He that cometh after me is preferred before me, because He was before me." That which comes to meet the work of the Baptist, however closely it corresponded with his activity, is in no sense an outcome of what he has done. It cannot be accounted for by his preparation. It arrives in response to what he has done: but it is itself of another kind and quality; and far from being an outgrowth of his efforts, it has its origin far behind him, and has a

significance sealed to it by that origin which carries it far beyond and above all that he can ever be.

It is the old familiar truth of the Incarnation, that God smites down into the flesh, and that which is re-born in us by Him is not a product of what was there before, but a new creation—born, “not of the blood, nor of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” That is the entire secret, that we are born again from “above.” And, given this secret, then the mere question of sudden or gradual arrival is immaterial. In either case what happens is an invasion, an irruption. God breaks in, that is the crucial point, either by a cataclysmic close or by slow stealing grace.

In that word grace we have St. Paul’s essential argument secreted. We are saved not of ourselves, not by an effort from within ; but something unaccounted for and inexplicable happens. God replaces man’s endeavour. So the kingdom of immanent grace tallies with the kingdom of transcendental irruption. And this law of grace is open to just the same perils as those which beset the coming of the Day, the perils, namely, of dis-

order, recklessness, carelessness, disorganization. St. Paul has to war against the like misunderstanding in both cases. Does he, by the law of grace, reduce the value of human effort? God forbid. Grace, in order to arrive requires just the same persistent, patient, persevering well-doing as prepares for the coming of the Day. Grace, therefore, and the Coming, far from being antagonistic in idea, both conspire to moralize life in precisely the same method.

And in order to concentrate and centralize this fusion of the two comings, the Church had at its heart the Eucharist, the feast in which He ever comes, and yet the feast which is for ever held under the pressure of a final Coming. It is celebrated "until His coming again." This final Coming, which at once closes and consummates this age and also inaugurates a new and eternal age, is the one Event towards which all that is now done tends. The very act in which the life of grace crowns itself still looks to an imminent inrushing arrival, the ultimate overwhelming, catastrophic act. All that now is, though it be indeed a present Coming, is but a stage to be surpassed and transfigured by that which is beyond. There

is nothing final in what we are : we are only waiting "until the Coming again." Yet still, through all the waiting time, the ultimate Comer comes. He arrives, He enters in, He sets the feast. He ordains this steady, quiet, regular, recurrent, calculable, sure, and persistent arrival, with its punctual renewal of reiterated supplies, which is the very strength and stay of that process by which the Kingdom, slowly and in order and by rule, under fixed conditions, by an unwavering act, spreads continuously its widening horizons. This patient, untiring process of grace is simply a prolonged edition of that arrival which the ultimate Coming will gather up into an instantaneous completion. The last act will sum up in a moment the significance of all that has preceded. The hidden secret which has always been true, that even in the act by which we work out our own salvation it is God that worketh in us, will be made finally manifest when God openly and over-poweringly enters on the scene to fill it with Himself. So the Eucharist, the typical expression of that slow inward movement by which the spirit lays hold on the earth, never loses its sense of the pressure of that final Appearing. Grace rests on the Coming.

And if we once have laid hold of this deep identity underlying the two conceptions of grace and the Coming, namely, that God *arrives*, whether suddenly or slowly, we can at least begin to understand how it was that the first believers passed from the one conception to the other without violent shock, with smooth spontaneity, never feeling that they had been deceived, still less that our Lord had been mistaken. They might be disappointed, but they were never disillusioned. They never recoiled ; but retained their absolute confidence in the unshaken authority of Christ. He had come, as He came at Pentecost. He was always coming, as He comes in grace. And He will come again. And the fact that He comes now is the pledge that He will come again. And all the Comings verify a single law of life, the law of arrival and the attitude of expectation. The prayer " Even so, come, Lord Jesus," covers every form of the Coming.

Now, if this be true, if our present ethical effort can only be fully interpreted by a final eschatological arrival ; if there is a secret hidden arrival always going on which waits to be fully disclosed as an arrival from afar ; if that which

is now secret and limited must be at last uncovered and made manifest ; if the God who is always the sole Author of our life must show Himself at last to be what He is ; if, that is, the present process of salvation half conceals its own truth and looks to a further Day of full disclosure,—then the eschatological outlook is permanently necessary to our life. It ought always to be felt to be necessary to the full explanation of the present process of our redemption. It can never drop out, for the present situation is imperfect without it. It is not to be dismissed, then, as an illusion of early Christians, but to be recovered as an essential element in all true faith. Always, at every moment, inside the process, we must look for something that goes infinitely beyond the present situation. The standard of our judgment can never be satisfied by what now is, nor can the present opportunities of grace exhaust the possibilities of what God has in store, and which “ eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.”

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